

BEYOND THE PREDICATE

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Metaphysical Structure

1. Structure vs. sparse properties

Two axes of difference with Armstrong and Lewis:

Ontology L&A presuppose abstracta

Scope L&A consider only properties and relations

The axes are related: if you're committed to entities then you're less likely to apply naturalness where it's strained to think in terms of entities.

2. The reason to generalize

The questions we ask about predicates are there to be asked about expressions of other syntactic categories as well.

<u>Dispute</u>	<u>Crucial expression</u>
ontology	quantifiers
time	tense operators
modality	modal operators
intuitionist logic	sentential connectives

What are the sources of resistance to this thought?

3. Inapplicability of the similarity test

Sharing of [the perfectly natural properties] makes for qualitative similarity, they carve at the joints, they are intrinsic, they are highly specific, the sets of their instances are *ipso facto* not highly miscellaneous...(Lewis, 1986, 60)

This “similarity criterion” seems inapplicable to, for example, quantifiers and sentential connectives. And insofar as we can apply it, it seems to deliver the wrong results: every two things share the feature of *existing*; so doesn’t that mean that the existential quantifier fails the similarity criterion?

Response:

- Lewis isn’t trying to define anything
- Naturalness is bigger than the similarity criterion
- The similarity criterion actually does apply, properly construed

4. No entities

The worry: there aren’t any entities (properties, relations) on which to hang naturalness, when you get to sentential operators, quantifiers, etc.

Response: we need a non predicate regimentation of talk of structure. The expression must combine directly with expressions from different grammatical categories.

5. Unclear epistemology?

The worry: how could we ever tell when attributions of generalized structure are correct?

Response:

- A Quinean criterion of ideological commitment. A theory’s ideological choices are bound up in its theoretical successes, just as are its ontological choices.
- Ideology (despite the name) as much a part of worldly content as ontology
- Some logical conceptual decisions, so familiar as to escape notice, are wildly successful ideological posits
- Fixation on ontology is both too narrow and incautious.

6. Latent conventionalism?

Worry: the vague thought that it is appropriate to evaluate expressions for carving at the joints only when they are “contentful”; nonpredicates (or logical expressions, anyway), are not contentful.

Like Hume, I divide all genuine propositions into two classes: those which, in his terminology, concern “relations of ideas,” and those which concern “matters of fact.” The former class comprises the *a priori* propositions of logic and pure mathematics, and these I allow to be necessary and certain only because they are analytic. That is, I maintain that the reason why these propositions cannot be confuted in experience is that they do not make any assertion about the empirical world, but simply record our determination to use symbols in a certain fashion. (Ayer, 1936, 31)

[A statement is analytic] when its validity depends solely on the definitions of the symbols it contains...[Analytic statements are] devoid of factual content” (Ayer, 1936, 78)

What is the alleged relationship between our adopting conventions, and the truth of “if snow is white then snow is white”? *Not:*

- If we had adopted different conventions, ‘if snow is white then snow is white’ would have been false.
- If we had adopted different conventions, then it would not have been the case that if snow is white then snow is white.
- ‘If snow is white then snow is white’ is *about* our conventions.
- Given our conventions, it’s automatically true that if snow is white then snow is white.

(B) Something is a bachelor iff it is an unmarried man

(A) Something is an unmarried man iff it is an unmarried man

...definitions are available only for transforming truths, not for founding them (Quine, 1936, p. 81).

Suppose I say: “a constraint on what I mean is that every sentence of the form ‘if ϕ then ϕ ’ is to come out true”. What could go wrong?

- There may *be* no meaning satisfying the constraint [tonk]
- There may be more than one [plonk]
- The constraint may be overridden [reference magnetism, subtle aspects of use]

References

Ayer, Alfred Jules (1936). *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1946. Second edition.

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Quine, W. V. O. (1936). “Truth by Convention.” In O. H. Lee (ed.), *Philosophical Essays for A. N. Whitehead*, 90–124. New York: Longmans. Reprinted in Quine 1966: 70–99.

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